

Protect your children from environmental hazards



As parents and kids get ready to head back to school, it's a great time for parents to update your child's vaccine records. It's also a good idea to be aware of your child's environment and how it might be affecting their health. The environment affects children differently than adults. Because their bodies are still growing, children are at greater risk if they are exposed to environmental contaminants. Contaminants are anything that can cause something to become unclean, polluted, or not pure. They can be found anywhere and some are unsafe.

CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network brings together data and information on children's health. In this network, you can learn reasons why children are at greater risk for health effects from environmental contaminants, how exposures to environmental hazards can affect a child's growth and development, and ways to protect children from environmental exposures so they can live safer, healthier lives.

ASTHMA

Asthma is a chronic disease that affects the airways that carry oxygen in and out of the lungs. If a person has asthma, the inside of these airways is irritated and swollen. Asthma can cause shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing, and tightness in the chest. Asthma is a major chronic health problem for children. It can get in the way of normal things like playing outdoors, running, and even being around pets.

CHILDHOOD CANCERS

The most common childhood cancers are leukemias, cancers of the blood cells. There are different kinds of childhood leukemia. The most common kinds are acute lymphocytic leukemia and acute myelogenous leukemia. Brain and other nervous system cancers are the second most common types of childhood cancers. Of the 12 major

types of childhood cancer, leukemia and brain and other nervous system cancers account for 40 percent of all cases among children less than 20 years of age.

LEAD

Childhood lead poisoning is preventable. Before some uses of lead were restricted, approximately 88 percent of preschool children in the United States (U.S.) had lead levels high enough to cause serious health problems. With less lead in the environment, lead poisonings have decreased and become less severe. However, lead poisoning still occurs. Approximately 500,000 U.S. children between 1 and 5 years old have blood lead levels greater than the level at which public health interventions are recommended.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

In the United States, about 1 in 6 children have a developmental disability. Developmental disabilities are a diverse group of severe chronic conditions that are due to mental and/or physical impairments. People with developmental disabilities have problems with major life activities such as language, movement, learning, self-help, and living by themselves. These disabilities can begin anytime during development up to age 22.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Socioeconomic factors, such as education, occupation, and income, are conditions that may affect how children live. Poverty affects families of all races and backgrounds and especially children. U.S. Census Bureau data show that an estimated 8.6 percent of Non-Hispanic whites, 24.7 percent of African Americans, 23.2 percent of Latino Americans, and 11.8 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander Americans are living in poverty. Research has shown that children living in families with very little money and no health insurance may have more poor health outcomes at birth and throughout their lives.

A toddler playing in dirt contaminated with high levels of lead can become sick from lead poisoning. A child with asthma playing outside when the air quality is bad may have an asthma attack. Environmental hazards are not just outside, but can also be found inside a child's home or school. So visit the Tracking Network today to explore the data and learn more about children's environmental health.

Check out the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network at www.cdc.gov/ephrtracking.